Despite pessimism, a 'leaderless' resistance exists in country, SLF told

• Two-day Sindh Literature Festival opens at Beach Luxury Hotel • 27th Amendment and canals construction on Indus dominate discussions

By Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: The controversial 27th Amendment and proposed construction of canals on the Indus River dominated discussions on the first day of the Eight edition of the Sindh Literature Festival (SLF), which began here at a local hotel on Saturday.

Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Husain Shah inaugurated the two-day SLF at the lawn of the Beach Luxury Hotel. He said Sindh was a land of love and tolerance.

He admitted that Karachi needed better transport service and the Transport Minister Sharjeel Memon was working on it as the number of buses was being increased.

He said it was a vision of PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to develop infrastructure not only in Karachi, but also all over Sindh.

PPP MNA and former television host Mahtab Akbar Rashdi taking part in discussion titled 'Challenges of the modern era and responsibilities of intellectuals" moderated by academic Dr Riaz Shaikh lamented that freedom of expression was being undermined everywhere, including the US, as the ruling elite did not have the courage to listen to the truth. However courageous people have always spoken the truth and showed the way to the public, she added.

Politicians are making such legislation on the pretext of 'allowing the system to function' which may cause problems for coming generations, she added.

She said that everyone knew under what "compulsions" the legislation was being carried out.

However, Ms Rashdi said times would not stop and the world had seen the worst situation as even in the Roman Empire. The people came out on roads as 'risk' had to be taken, she added.

She said despite restrictions, the people particularly the youth were showing 'defiance' though their programmes on YouTube.

She regretted that "immunity" was being sought for everything though situation could change within minutes.

Regarding "way forward", Ms Rashdi said youths and women were going to change things.

Women on social media, NGOs and universities are coming forward while the youth are aware of every today. She wondered as to how they would remain silent. Despite the 'adverse' situation, the youths are moving and ultimately they will take us to the 'positive side', she added.

Lawyer Shahab Osto in an apparent reference to the 27th Amendment said that the present apex judiciary had given every decision in favour of the ruling elite, despite this, the elite appeared fearful of whatever independence the judiciary enjoyed.

He said for the last over 20 years, the political leadership had made 'compromises' for personal, party and parochial interests.

He said the masses had lost all hopes from "change-makers" who had become "irrelevant" but Imran Khan may "inspire" them while being in jail, not as being prime minister. It would be another thing what he would do if he came to power again. He said despite pessimism, 'leaderless' resistance existed in the country.

He said there was an 'alarming situation' in two provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while the third province, Punjab had become a "police state". The senior lawyer said he had recently seen hope when people, particularly youths, came out on roads themselves against the controversial canal project in Sindh.

Senior journalist and writer Dr Naazir Mahmood opined that intellectuals are one who challenge 'centres of power' and who raise their voice against violation of democratic and human rights while being enlightened and conscious.

He said there was 'confusion and ambiguity' among the youths, which has to be removed.

Dr Abid Mir said the youths of Balochistan were facing "different problems". The Baloch youths are questioning their leadership and their intellectuals regarding their compromises and opportunism, he added.

Water issues

Earlier taking part in a discussion "The threats facing the land and rivers and our future" being moderated by journalist Afia Salam, development professional Naseer Memon said there was an 'obsession' with dams whenever there was drought or floods but "dams are not a solution to the water problem".

He cited the present case of Tehran, capital of Iran, where five dams had been constructed for provision of water, but there was a 'severe drought' for the last three years.

He said the real issue was 'imbalance' between the resources and population. The provinces were not making efforts to control population growth as 80pc resources were being distributed on the basis of population through the National Finance Commission while the population's share in distribution of resources was only 15pc in India as compared to Pakistan.

He said there was no "surplus" water in the country as everywhere Irsa issued warning of water shortage.

Lawyers' convention against 27th Amendment descends into chaos

Unknown persons manhandle bar leaders when KBA's Korai slams home minister

By Waseem Shamsi

SUKKUR: The All Sindh Lawyers' Convention at the District Bar Sukkur, organised on Saturday to protest the 27th Constitutional Amendment, was marred by commotion and clashes between lawyers and several alleged workers of a political party.

Tensions rose when some individuals started chanting slogans against President Asif Zardari, while others countered with slogans in favour of the president.

The situation deteriorated with the involvement of some individuals in plain clothes, which ultimately led to verbal altercations and scuffles between them and the lawyers.

Some protesting lawyers reportedly overpowered five men in civvies who had entered the convention hall and began beating them.

Advocate K.B. Laghari said the individuals were apprehended and handed over to the police.

"Lawyers are brothers, and no one can make us fight," he said.

He added that amid the unrest, Sindh High Court Bar President Qurban Ali Malano felt unwell and was shifted to a hospital in a deteriorating condition.

The lawyers said that the commotion began when Karachi Bar General Secretary Rehman Korai criticised

Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar during his speech. Upon hearing this, the alleged workers of a political party reportedly attacked senior bar leaders, including Aamir Nawaz Waraich, Qurban Malano, K.B. Laghari, Haseeb Jamali, and Shafqat Raheem.

Although other lawyers tried to save their colleagues, several senior members sustained minor injuries and were taken to the civil hospital for medical treatment.

Meanwhile, Sindh United Party (SUP) President and Save Sindh River Movement Convener Syed Zain Shah strongly condemned the attack on the lawyers, saying "it appeared to have been carried out under state patronage".

He said the assault was not only an attack on the legal fraternity but also a direct blow to the Constitution, the law, democratic values and freedom of expression.

Mr Shah said that such incidents were a dangerous attempt to sabotage Sindh's peaceful and democratic political struggle.

He reaffirmed that the SUP stands firmly with the lawyers in their constitutional and legal struggle and will support them at every forum.

Lanjar condemns attack, orders probe

Dawn Report

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Law, Home and Parliamentary Affairs Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar has taken strong notice of the attack on senior lawyers and expressed deep regret over the incident.

The government will take every possible step to ensure the safety and protection of lawyers. A full investigation into the Sukkur incident has already been ordered, and responsibility will be determined following the inquiry, he said.

Terming the attack on lawyers highly condemnable, he stated that those involved in the assault will face strict legal action in accordance with the law.

Mr Lanjar emphasised that lawyers are his own community like family, and urged the legal fraternity to avoid internal disputes and maintain unity and discipline.

He added that restoring a peaceful environment remains a top priority of the government, and all necessary measures are being taken in this regard.

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